



March 1, 2016

Committee Chair Peter Pettalia
Capitol Building
P.O. Box 30014
Lansing, MI 48909-7514

Testimony

Re: Oppose SB 501

Dear Committee Chair Pettalia:

My name is Teresa Hendricks, and I'm the Executive Director of Migrant Legal Aid. I want to take this opportunity to explain how Senate Bill 501 is a step in the wrong direction, and encourage you to end any consideration of this bill being passed into law.

Senate Bill 501, if passed, will require police officers to become experts on over 75 different types of visas available to immigrant and temporary foreigners. It requires the police to be able to accurately assess whether a visa is valid, and to have perfect understanding of the many nuances and procedural issues that are inherent with the traveling and immigration processes. This is a task that takes immigration experts years to be comfortable with, and is an inefficient use of a police officer's time.

Furthermore, this bill will contribute to general confusion for international travelers between states. By having different identification requirements between states, visitors, such as tourists or students from foreign countries, will run the risk of breaking the law without realizing it.

Finally, this bill will also increase tension between law enforcement and vulnerable communities, such as those whose immigration status is in question, or those with limited English proficiency. A safer Michigan requires our communities to work together, but this will further alienate those who are already uncertain about a law enforcement officer's motives.

Representative Pettalia, I urge you to consider the practical requirements and practical ramifications of this bill. It's going in the wrong direction, and we need you to help put a stop to it.

Sincerely,

Teresa Hendricks
Migrant Legal Aid